

Central St. Landry Economic Development District

**Board Meeting**

**Meeting Date and Time: November 9, 2023 @ 8:30 am**  
**Meeting Place: 5367 I-49 S. Service Road, Opelousas LA**

**AGENDA**

- ❖ Welcome
- ❖ Pledge
- ❖ Roll Call
- ❖ CSLEDD Business Recognition Program – Sterling Automotive Group
- ❖ Approval of the October 12, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes
- ❖ Financial Report
  - Introduction of Amended Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2023, and ending December 31, 2023
  - Introduction of Proposed Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2024, and ending December 31, 2024
  - Engagement Letter 2024 Monthly Services John S. Dowling contract renewal
- ❖ Old Business
  - Réserve Naturelle de la Paroisse de Saint Landry - Update
  - Equine Sales Facility Consideration - Update
  - Grass Cutting and Litter Abatement - Update
  - Sewer Capital Outlay - Update
  - Retail Strategies Monthly - Update
  - I-49 Midway Corridor Project - Update
  - DOTD Regional I-49 Meeting - Update

The following members were present in person: Frank “Buddy” Helton, Ammy Taylor, Rod Sias, Yvonne Normand,

The following members were absent: Tina Vidrine, Dr. Derek Metoyer

The following non-voting members were present virtually:

The following non-voting members were present in person: Teresa Reaves (SLED), Brittany Cretchain (SLED), Bill Rodier (SLED) Janece Riser (SLED)

The following non-voting members were absent: Jessie Bellard (Parish President), and Jerry Red Jr. (Parish Council Chairman)

The following guests were present in person: Ms. Helen Amos (Sterling Automotive), Mr. Rusty Castellano (Sterling Automotive), Mr. Kade Jones (Acadiana Planning commission), Mr. Bobby Ardoin (St. Landry Now Newspaper), Dana Quibedeaux (JS Dowling), Martin McClendon (St Landry Parish Government), Cilicia Savoy (St Landry Parish Government), Graig LeBlanc (Chief of Police Opelousas Police Department), Mark Guidry (Assistant Police Chief Opelousas Police Department), Craig Noel (American Integration Contractors)

The following guests were present virtually: Mr. William Jarrell

It was determined that a quorum was present.

Chairman Helton recognized the guests, thanked everyone for their time, and opened the meeting at 8:40 AM.

CSLEDD Business of the Month – Stirling Automotive Group.: Chairman Helton introduced Ms. Helen Amos and Mr. Rusty Castellano representing Sterling Automotive, the recipients of the November Business of the Month. Chairman Helton thanked Sterling Automotive for being such an important member of the Central Economic Development District and Opelousas, as well as the Parish of St. Landry. Ms. Amos gave a lovely thank you on behalf of owner Mr. Art Leblanc.

Approval of the October 12, 2023, Minutes.: Chairman Helton asked if anyone had any changes or corrections to the October minutes. A motion was made by Yovonne Normand to accept the October 12th Meeting Minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Rod Sias. Motion carried without objection.

Financial Report.: In the absence of Ms. Tina Vidrine the financial report was given by Ms. Dana Quibedeaux of JS Dowling. She went over the income and expenditures. Chairman Helton stated that the tax collections were up 9% over this month last year and that he only sees that holding steady.

Introduction of Amended Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2023, and ending December 31, 2023.: Ms. Dana Quebedeaux was present to go over the amended budget. She pointed out the items that needed to be amended, including revenue from the sales tax Collection which went up 22%. The amended expenditures were due to projects and recent land purchases.

Introduction of Proposed Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2024, and ending December 31, 2024.: Ms. Dana Quebedeaux went over the proposed budget for 2024. She then went over the proposed expenditures. She stated that next month she will have a more accurate budget with numbers up to date, as the budget will be accepted at that time.

Engagement Letter 2024 Monthly Services John S. Dowling contract renewal.: Chairman Helton went over the letter provided by JS Dowling for accounting services. He pointed out that the fee went up to \$475.00 per month. and it was a fair and moderate increase. A motion was made by Mr. Senic Batiste and seconded by Ms. Yvonne Normand to accept the JS Dowling contract. Motion carried without objection.

#### **Old Business:**

Equine Sales Facility Consideration – Action.: Chairman Helton informed the board that the reports for the inspection and appraisal are in, and the appraisal was well above the asking price. The inspection was as expected



with the normal wear and tear of a building of its age. Mr. Senic Batiste asked what the exit plan is for CSLED getting out of the project. Chairman Helton responded with the answer that there is no exit plan at this time as the facility owners did not allow a six-month due diligence which would have allowed adequate time for that level of plan detail. Ms. Yvonne Normand stated that in conversations that she has had with the equine community she has received feedback that the facility needs to partner with the equine sales community that provide needed services. Chairman Helton stated that he had some conversations the equine community leaders as well, and that the partnership of a quarter horse sale is a possibility, as well as potential for housing the state racing association and thoroughbred breeders' association.

Ms Ammy Taylor stated that those topics brought up by Ms Normand were always part of the discussions surrounding this purchase and are part of the five-year plan. Mr. Rodier stated that putting together an exit plan at this moment was just not possible, but that the commercial area surrounding the facility is the highest rated appreciated property in St Landry Parish so in that context that an investment well under the appraised value of the property should be well protected. He also asked the board to consider that the parish is the Equine Capital of Louisiana, and if we are not progressively promoting the equine community that would be a significant setback to this initiative. He noted to the board that if the purchase goes forward someone dedicated will need to be put into place to take manage and promote the facility which he noted will be a lot of activity. Mr. Rodier reminded the board that the cost projections by the committee only included a part time person for the first six months, but that the search for a full-time person would need to start shortly after a purchase if that is the pleasure of the board. Mr. Rodier reminded the group that SLED does not have the additional staff to cover this function, but SLED could potentially manage the activities of this person.

Chairman Buddy Helton suggested that the established committee needs to move forward as a full-time committee which will include Senic Batiste, Rod Sias, Tina Vidrine and Ammy Taylor will take turns, and SLED CEO Bill Rodier. Ammy Taylor mentioned that the interim facilities person should be included as well and that recruiting a full-time facility director could take months.

Mr. Rod Sias stated that he is interested in the project but has some concerns regarding the financial end, as far as repairs, etc. He stated that it is in a strategic location and with us pushing equine in the community it would be tragic to not move forward with the project.

Ms. Yvonne Normand stated that it is important to move the equine project forward, but if for some reason it didn't work out, it (the property) would be ideal for medical facilities.

Mr. Sias reminded the board that the logistics of the property is a consideration as well.

A motion was made by Ms. Yvonne Normand to move into the purchase Equine Sales Facility at \$1.589 Million Dollars and authorize Chairman Helton to sign on behalf of CSLED to do so. A second was made by Ms. Ammy Taylor. All members present with the exception of Mr. Senic Batise were in favor and the motion carried.

*Réserve Naturelle de la Paroisse de Saint Landry – Update:* Mr. Rodier gave an update. He mentioned that Land Architecture, Michael Cullen is out for a bit, but they are trying to get the presentation scheduled sometime after Thanksgiving but before Christmas. Mr. Rodier stated that he expects to receive the presentation sometime this week.

Sewer Capital Outlay - Update: Chairman Helton informed the board that everything is moving forward with it. He informed the board that phased C on the east side of the highway is budgeted for capital outlay next year. Mr. Bill Rodier stated that it was brought up at the last SLED meeting that the hold harmless language in the CEA that was drafted by Attorney Bruce Gaudin between CSLEDD and SLED was not the same language as the CEA between the state and SLED, so SLED has asked Bruce Gaudin to draft the CEA so that the language of the Hold Harmless portion is mirrored on all documents for consistency. Chairman Helton further informed the board that for the phase D portion of the project, a submission has been prepared for the submittal of the capital outlay. Phase D will be the section that goes down Harry Guilbeau and will reach all the way to Royal Gardens. He stated that there has been a tentative agreement between the City of Opelousas and St Landry Parish. Chairman Helton also said that half of Royal Gardens is on Septic service to his knowledge and the newer half of Royal Gardens is on a small independent sewer package that is run by a private entity, but they are willing to say that it can be incorporated into the mix, and that is also included into the phase D proposal. He mentioned backing up to the East Side, also included in the East Side phase C which we have capital outlay for includes expansion in capacity of the plant itself.

Retail Strategies Monthly Update: Retail Strategies was not available to give an update at today's meeting.


I-49 Midway Corridor Project - Update: Mr. Kade Jones from Acadiana Planning Commission was present to give an update. Mr. Jones informed the board that the project is at the point of being ready to reach out for community outreach. Mr. Jones stated that this is to allow the public to provide input. Chairman Helton asked if the Parish Planning Commission needed to be in place first and Mr. Jones stated that the Parish Planning Commission should be in place in his opinion but that the St Landry Parish Government is in control of that portion. Mr. Jones stated that the public may mistakenly feel that the land use proposal is zoning, which it is not, so that is why they need to be informed of what an overlay is and how it is effective. Conversation ensued.

Opelousas Police Department LPR, Surveillance Camera Presentation – Action: Assistant Police Chief Mark Guidry introduced CEO of American Integration Contractors, Mr. Craig Noel, to make a detailed presentation on the Security and License Plate Reading camera system which they are asking CSLEDD for financial help with. Mr. Rod Sias asked where they will be installed, and if neighborhoods and businesses can help. The answer from Mr. Noel was that yes, other cameras can be shared with the Police Department system such as Wal-Mart, HOH's and other entities. Police Chief Graig LeBlanc expanded on that answer and went over the wider areas that they will be able to reach. A motion was made by Mr. Senic Batiste to pay the Opelousas Police Department for the Security and license plate reading cameras, licensing fees, and reoccurring charges for three years at the price of \$149,000.00. A second to the motion was made by Ms. Yvonne Normand. Motion carried without Objection.

**Adjourn:** With no further business to bring before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Yvonne Normand and seconded by Ms. Ammy Taylor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:39 am.



Secretary: Yvonne Lognion Normand



Chairman: Frank "Buddy" Helton